

**Our Mission:** Bringing together an ecumenical coalition of Quad City area churches to help feed the hungry, offer emergency assistance to those in crisis, and provide a transitional housing program for women and children who are victims of domestic violence or human trafficking.

## Palm Sunday: Consider the Donkey, Not the Branches



Christian churches throughout the world will begin our holiest week of the year on what is popularly known as Palm Sunday. It commemorates one of the few events in the life of Jesus recorded in all four gospel stories: his entry into Jerusalem, followed by a raucous and warm welcome and a lot of waving branches. (Only John 12:13 mentions they were palms.) In Israel today, churches still reenact the journey from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem—the route supposedly taken by Jesus all those centuries ago.

As a pastor's son, even in the non-liturgical world of the Black Baptist tradition, I recall receiving my palm branch and

dutifully marching into the sanctuary with a palm in one hand and my unintelligible King James Bible in the other. Now, as a pastor myself, I have taken a different view of Psalm Sunday.

As I study this story in Scripture, I'm struck by the fact that the primary symbol for this day—a palm—was not chosen by Jesus.

John writes, "They took palm branches and went out to meet him" (John 12:13). Why did the crowd choose palm branches? It could simply have been that palms were nearby. But history tells us there might have been a deeper reason: Those plants were symbolically linked to military victories and Messiahship.

A generation before Jesus, when Simon Maccabee drove Israel's enemies out Jerusalem, people celebrated by waving palm branches:

On the twenty-third day of the second month, in the one hundred seventy-first year, the Jews entered it with praise and palm branches, and with harps and cymbals and stringed instruments, and with hymns and songs, because a great enemy had been crushed and removed from Israel. (1 Mac. 13:51, NRSV)

The Testament of Naphtali, another book written by Jews of that period, also discussed palm branches in the context of messianic expectation. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, people used them to interpret his identity. He was another Simon Maccabee—a long-hoped-for king who would drive out the Gentiles.

All the Gospels are clear that Jesus chose a symbol, a way for his people to make sense of his kingship. But it was the young donkey, not the palm branch (John 12:14). John rightly sees the donkey as Jesus intended. It was the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9, which says, "Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey."

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Jesus picked a symbol that emphasized humility and lowliness, instead of military strength. That fact should inform how we celebrate and remember his entry into Jerusalem. Of course, it would be impractical for every church across the globe to find a donkey to drag into and out of its sanctuary. But we can spend Palm Sunday reflecting on what it means to follow a king who rejected the way of violence.

As we look to the donkey, not the palm, what practices might it inspire? What aspects of American Christian culture might it critique?

I'm not arguing that all public expressions of Christianity need to be passive and nonassertive. In the public square, for example, I notice some Christians "tone policing" others and being uncomfortable with displays of emotion. Their goal is a reserved faith that never speaks plainly about the evils lurking in the hearts of people or society more broadly. Christians can and should use strong words, especially as they relate to structural injustice or personal unrighteousness.

On the flip side, I've noticed that some of us have become much too confident in our own discernment. We're convinced that we are right and our enemies are not just wrong but evil. Surely Jesus hates the things we hate, doesn't he?

Surely, he wants to establish his rule through us right now, one angry tweet and fiery comment at a time. We pick up our palm branches and raise our shouts in support of the Jesus we've created in our minds, not the crucified Messiah—whose rule is rooted and grounded in love. He has become a rallying cry for our agenda, not his.

We have forgotten that the world is both the object of God's affection and a place in rebellion against its creator. Christian faithfulness involves holding these things in tension. We have granted so many exceptions to the love command that it's almost empty of meaning. We have hoarded God's grace for ourselves while refusing to offer it to others. All of us are shouting about Jesus but not paying attention to his own words and actions.

To be clear, I am not a killjoy. I have no desire to snatch the palm branches out of the hands of happy children or to end the long tradition of processions and hymns that mark this day. Instead, I hope that during Holy Week celebrations, we can slow down enough to think about the conflicting messages of Palm Sunday.

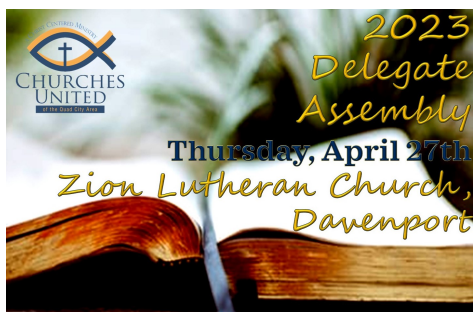
Jesus' claim to be the Messiah was not simply about a goal—God's rule over all things. He and the crowd agreed on that point. His earthly life and ministry were also about the means of accomplishing that goal: namely, sacrificial love. Jesus gave us not only the gift of forgiveness, flowing through his Passion and resurrection, but also a way to follow. That way needs to inform our public and private witness.

Stated differently, I'm worried that, in our desire to defeat enemies, we're losing Christian virtues—the fruit of the Spirit.

If we strive to establish God's rule through self-assertion over neighborly care, pragmatism over principle, and malice over love, then whatever else we accomplish, we are no longer following in the way of Jesus. God chose meekness, integrity, and love to gather his people. That is the message of Palm Sunday. For all the shouts of acclamation, Jesus never lost sight of the cross.

This Holy Week, then, let's follow the one who sits atop the donkey, so that He can remind us again of the way to life eternal.

*Blessings,  
Mel*



**There's still time to register for this year's Delegate Assembly. Please RSVP by Monday, April 17th by contacting our office.**



## Cost of Senior Caregiving

People often underestimate the cost of caregiving. Whether it be the cost for the care of a senior living in their own home, an aging parent living with an adult child, or a senior living in a senior living community, cost becomes a primary factor that must be understood to make appropriate and effective life-impacting decisions. Each person's situation consists of a series of unique variables that will ultimately dictate which options and solutions are available for the care needs of the aging adult. These variables include the level and frequency of care, whether the senior is on Medicaid, Medicare, has long-term care insurance, long term

care annuity, or has the financial means for private pay care. Sometime families, including the aging senior, casually assume that when the time comes, their loved one will simply move into the charming senior living community across town only to learn later that there are care level restrictions, regulations regarding payor sources, and ancillary costs that are prohibitive to those plans. When it comes to understanding the cost of caregiving and putting yourself in the best position to make cost-effective care decisions, utilize the following five-step strategy.

### Take Time to Plan

Most crises can be avoided with proper planning. Too often, we fall victim to human nature and put off until tomorrow that which can (and should) be done today. Then, when we are suddenly confronted with the unexpected cost of senior living placement or senior care needs, we feel overwhelmed with the cost of the immediacy of the financial expenditures required.

### Contact a Senior Living Professional

It is not uncommon for people to jump into the waters of senior caregiving to quickly find themselves in need of a lifeline. Contact a professional that can help you navigate the senior living and care industry. Not only will this professional assist you in identifying your senior living options, she or he will be able to connect you with trusted financial, legal, and care giving professionals that will provide you with the resources and guidance necessary to maximize your senior living options.

### Fully Assess and Anticipate Care Needs

Care needs are essential to enjoying a high quality of life. Do not underestimate the level of care that you or your loved one will require, and that the senior facility are required to provide by law. Create a list of all the Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) that you or your loved one require assistance. These will include such things as bathing, personal hygiene, medication management, meal preparation, etc. If you are in the early planning stages for senior placement, anticipate what cares may be required in the future and figure those potential costs into your financial planning.

### Learn the Lingo of the Senior Care Industry

Like any industry, the senior care industry has its own lingo. Learn some of the common terminology used by the industry so you can fully participate in the conversations with doctors, nurses, care planners, and facility professionals.

### Familiarize Yourself with Care Industry Regulations and Criteria

The care industry is regulated by numerous federal and state regulation designed to ensure patient safety and welfare. Likewise, each senior facility will have a set of criteria they use that determine what payor sources they are able to accept, and the level of care needs they are able to provide. Some facilities will require private pay only or may not be able to provide a level of care that is required of you or your loved one. While it will not be necessary to know and recite regulations by memory, it will be to your advantage to have a general understanding of common regulations and criteria or to know how to access this information when needed.

The art of aging well can be learned and sustained, especially when we're prepared for it! LivWell Seniors is a free service that helps seniors and their families navigate senior living communities and services. They offer a free seminar called Aging 101: Being Proactive in Your Decisions. To register or bring it to your workplace, call the LivWell Seniors office at 563-265-0117.



## Thank you, Holmes Murphy.

In honor of International Women's Day, the Davenport office of Holmes Murphy partnered with Churches United to collect donations including hygiene products, food, and more. They were able to collect five large boxes of donations to help lift up other women in the community in their time of need.



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# Give Today to Churches United

Online at <http://www.cuqca.org/donate.php>

Call us at (563) 332-5002

Mail or drop off your gift:  
**Churches United of the Quad City Area**  
2535 Tech Drive, Suite 205  
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## Thank You!

Donate, keep up-to-date, and check out daily reflections by following us on Facebook at:



[www.facebook.com/ChurchesUnitedoftheQuadCityArea](http://www.facebook.com/ChurchesUnitedoftheQuadCityArea)

### Birdies for Charity

Support Churches United of the Quad City Area by donating to Birdies for Charity at: <https://birdiesforcharity.com/donate>  
Our bird number is 572.



All final pledges are due by July 7, 2023.

Chip in to support Churches United of the Quad City Area by donating to us through Birdies for Charity. The 2023 Birdies for Charity program has officially kicked-off and you can donate today at: <https://birdiesforcharity.com/donate>

Our bird # is 572.

Once again, participating charities are guaranteed a 5% bonus on their collected pledges.

The John Deere Classic is July 5 - July 9. All pledges are due by July 7.

### Thanksgiving in July Sponsors Needed

#### Thanksgiving in July Sponsors Needed

Our annual food collection drive and fundraiser to support our hunger ministries needs sponsors. We encourage churches and area businesses to participate. There is no fee for sponsorship. Sponsors are asked to host a collection box during the month of July. Sponsor logos will be featured prominently on collection boxes, in our newsletter, and on social media. All proceeds from the food drive will remain in the Quad Cities area.

For more information, contact Betsy Vanausdeln at 563-332-5002 or by email at [bvanausdeln@cuqca.org](mailto:bvanausdeln@cuqca.org).



### Save the Date: Women in Clergy Luncheon

This year's Women in Clergy Luncheon will be on Thursday, July 20th. Details coming soon.